

Environmental Equity Policy

Background: There is evidence suggesting that, in certain instances around the country, minority and lower income citizens/communities have been subjected to a disproportionate share of the risks associated with environmental hazards. Because the Hawaii Department of Health's mission is to provide leadership to monitor, promote, protect, and enhance the health and environmental well-being of our State, we are obliged to evaluate and address these risks. As a steward of the environment, the Department has set six environmental health goals that promote environmental protection within the context of sustainable development. They are to:

- protect and enhance Hawaii's air quality for the health of the people;
- protect Hawaii's groundwater from contamination for drinking, irrigation and other appropriate uses;
- protect and restore the quality of Hawaii's streams, wetlands, estuaries, and other inland waters for fish and wildlife, recreation, aesthetic enjoyment and other appropriate uses;
- ensure that Hawaii's coastal waters are safe and healthy for people, plants, and animals;
- protect Hawaii's lands from pollutants that endanger people and the environment and to rehabilitate contaminated lands;
- and to prevent death, illness and unsanitary conditions by deterring, controlling, and abating the incidence of noise, radiation, indoor pollution, food-borne illnesses, and vector-borne diseases.

Department staff are committed to reach all segments of Hawaii's population as we carry out our mission and pursue our goals.

Although federal and state environmental laws and implementing regulations have accomplished much to eliminate, control, and reduce pollution, we recognize that a higher number of potential sources of pollution lie within the more densely developed and industrialized areas of the state. These areas are also where the greatest number of lower income persons reside. To address potential inequalities in exposure to pollutants and in keeping with our mission, we have developed an Environmental Equity Policy.

Policy Statement: The Hawaii Department of Health Environmental Health Administration will, through the implementation of federal and state environmental laws, rules, policies, and programs, ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all persons as it evaluates and addresses the risks and consequences associated with environmental pollution.

Implementation Strategy: We are committed to incorporating environmental equity into our program development and implementation, policy making, and regulatory activities, and propose the following courses of action to attain these goals:

- The Department will review and assess the impacts of and opportunities provided by its activities with regard to lower income residents and ethnic minority groups.

into their respective programs. Environmental equity will be an integral part of the Department's land-use comment coordination program.

- The Department will encourage community participation in the Department's ongoing operations, and program development, including but not limited to inclusion on the agency's advisory groups and committees. In addition, the Department will continue to expand the program information available on its website.
- The Department will work with other federal, state, and municipal agencies on coordination of environmental equity issues.
- The Department will encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution methods if needed to resolve allegations of environmental inequity.

We recognize that barriers will be encountered as we implement our strategy. These barriers include: financial constraints; lack of effective interagency communication at local, state, and federal levels; lack of scientific knowledge on the relative importance of different types of risks; varying political and economic positions; lack of information technology - especially regarding access to comprehensive information on risks; and legal constraints. While the environmental achievements of the Department have been many, implementation of this Environmental Equity Policy and reduction of barriers affecting the Policy will aid in promoting our goals of preserving Hawaii's environmental health and public health.

DATED: Honolulu, Hawaii, January 2, 2002.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
STATE OF HAWAII

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Gill', is written over a horizontal line.

GARY GILL
Deputy Director
Environmental Health Administration

<p>Environmental Equity Policy Statement: The Hawaii Department of Health Environmental Health Administration will, through the implementation of federal and state environmental laws, rules, policies, and programs, ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all persons as it evaluates and addresses the risks and consequences associated with environmental pollution.</p>
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Implementation Strategy with Guidelines: We are committed to incorporating environmental equity into our program development and implementation, policy making, and regulatory activities, and propose the following courses of action to attain these goals:

- The Department will review and assess the impacts of and opportunities provided by its activities with regard to lower income residents and ethnic minority groups.

Through use of maps generated by U.S. Census Bureau data the Department will determine where the state's low-income residents reside. DOH-regulated facilities will be layered on these maps, which will aide in the assessment of impacts of and opportunities provided by DOH activities in these communities.

- The Department will foster a heightened awareness of environmental equity issues among its own staff. Managers will integrate environmental equity as a core value into their respective programs. Environmental equity will be an integral part of the Department's land-use comment coordination program.

Through staff meetings and general review of staff work managers will be the leaders in integrating environmental equity as a core value into their respective programs. When commenting on land-use issues the location of the site in relation to the Census Bureau data maps will be assessed. If needed, a comment stating that the area is sensitive to allegations of environmental inequity can be made.

- The Department will encourage community participation in the Department's ongoing operations, and program development, including but not limited to inclusion on the agency's advisory groups and committees. In addition, the Department will continue to expand the program information available on its website.

The Department's Environmental Management Advisory Group will continue to make every effort to ensure its membership represents leaders from all socio-economic areas of the state. Recognizing that Hawaii has the most people on-line per capita in the U.S. and has unique challenges as an island state, the Department will continue to expand the dissemination of information through its website. The Department is also committed to keeping these pages current. Each office is responsible for adding new information and removing outdated information in a timely manner.

- The Department will work with other federal, state, and municipal agencies on coordination of environmental equity issues.

Coordination will be conducted on a case-by-case basis.

- The Department will encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution methods if needed to resolve allegations of environmental inequity.